

MEETING MINUTES

Focus Macomb Quality of Life Committee

**Macomb County Administration Building
One South Main Street ~ 9th Floor Conference Room
Mount Clemens, Michigan**

July 11, 2006

Members Present:

Karen Parteau, Marketing, Health Alliance Plan
Ameldia Brown, Director, Faith & Community Health, St. Joseph Hospital
Tony Comito, TACOM, National Automotive Center
Ken DeCock, Co-owner, Boyka's Farm Market
Larry Garrisi, President, Sunshine Homes
Arthur Mullen, Director, Mount Clemens DDA
Jon Peterson, External Affairs Director, AT&T
Mounir Sharobeem, President Emeritus, Judson Center
Grace Shore, President, Central Macomb Chamber of Commerce

Macomb County Planning and Economic Development Staff Present:

Michael Rozny, Program Manager, Community Development Services ~ Quality of Life Staff Advisor
Maria Zardis, Grants Coordinator
Kate Doyle, Recorder

Members Not Present:

Paul Socia, President, Citizens State Bank ~ Co-Chair, Quality of Life Committee
James Flom, President, Thunder Bay Pattern Works
Tom Guastello, President, Center Management
James Kaye, President and CEO, Macomb Community Bank
Scott Kowalkowski, Business Development, Colasanti Group
David Miller, Regional V.P., Presbyterian Villages of Michigan
Karl Oskoian, Director, Communications and Public Relations, General Dynamics Land Systems
Dana Peterson, Founding Director, Director of Fund Development, CARE House
Guy Rizzo, President, GTR Builders
Roy Rose, President, Anderson, Eckstein and Westrick ~ Focus Macomb Co-Chair
Jim Safian, President, Premier Financial Credit Union

THE MEETING WAS BROUGHT TO ORDER AT 7:35 A.M. by Co-Chair Karen Parenteau, who welcomed the members of the committee. Michael Rozny reminded the members the purpose of Focus Macomb is economic development. He informed the committee that the recent Gyro Focus Group and Intellitrends study indicated that companies locate in Macomb County more because of the quality of life to be found here, in the areas of: recreation, good schools, our proximity to markets, and our proximity to Canada, and less for reasons thought to be our strength: cheap and abundant land, low taxes etc. Therefore the committee's study of quality of life issues is very important to future economic development. The *charge* of the committee between now and its presentation to the Board of Commissioners in November, is to define those areas and issues most important to current residents and corporations considering a move to Macomb County as a means to promote a renewed and robust economy.

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DEVELOPING FOCUS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr. Rozny told the members to consider its mission statement as they rated the level of importance of the focus areas from the “Quality of Life Questionnaire”. The mission statement is:

The Focus Macomb Quality of Life Committee will promote, among the general public, the reality that Macomb County is a place in which people choose to live, work and play.

He then explained the process by which the committee would consider each area of focus and present their conclusions to the Board of Commissioners. The presentation will be presented in three parts, as follows:

1. We have studied this issue (whatever it is) and have determined that...
2. Implementing the recommendations would significantly improve the economic climate in Macomb County by...
3. This is what we need from the County in order to make this recommendation work...

An open discussion among the members defined the sub-categories and elements to consider in each of the focus areas from the Questionnaire. The members then rated each focus area, from most important to least important *at this time*. The committee ranked the issues as follows:

- Culture and Activities
 - ◆ What cultural venues and activities are needed to elevate the quality of life in the County?
 1. Performing and Fine Arts.
 2. Major events (ex. Arts, Beats & Eats)
 3. As the County seat, Mt. Clemens should “define” culture in Macomb County
 4. “Destination” communities.
 5. Greater support by County government for the Arts.
 6. We need to develop private and corporate philanthropy leadership to support culture in the County.
 7. What events and activities in the County are free?
 8. Where can people take their families to learn about the history of the County?
 9. How does Macomb County rank for 501(c)3’s versus Oakland, Wayne and Kent counties?
- The Natural and Developed Environment
 - ◆ How do we???
 1. Acknowledge our agricultural areas and heritage.
 2. Recognize that expansion and elimination of open land affects development and disinvestment in our older areas.
 3. What affects air and water quality, and how can we address the issues?
 4. Are we using our land resources wisely and do we have enough open space?
 5. What is the state of our infrastructure?
 6. What about general trash/refuse and maintenance of existing structures and facilities?

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- Schools and Education
 - ◆ The committee recognizes the Focus Macomb Education Committee is developing strategies to strengthen our educational institutions, encourage more of our young people to pursue a bachelor level or post-graduate educational (<20% currently), and draw knowledge-based jobs to the County.
- Crime and Public Safety
 - ◆ People require a secure and safe environment in order to thrive.
 1. How do the communities view the police?
 2. Do we have adequate police and fire protection?
 3. What about homeland security?
 4. How are substance abuse, domestic violence and crime impacting our communities?
- Recreation
 - ◆ How do we encourage residents of the County and others in SE Michigan to recreate in Macomb County?
 1. How do Macomb County parks compare with those in Oakland County? Do we have enough parks and are they effectively promoted to encourage widespread use?
 2. How can we promote healthy lifestyles (e.g. biking, walking, boating) and can those activities be encouraged to support other objectives? (Example: Tandem bikes or promoting boat docking in new Baltimore to promote business in the central business district.)
 3. Can we challenge residents to use non-motorized paths to promote health?
- Health and Lifestyle
 - ◆ Macomb County residents fare poorly on several health indicators. How do we???
 1. What are the major health issues in Macomb County and how can we promote them? (e.g. health screening for women, children and seniors.)
 2. Is there a list of centers for urgent or emergency care in the County?
 3. What about community mental health issues, substance abuse, and the problems of the homeless.
- Financial Security
 - ◆ There is a need for financial literacy, particularly among the young and elderly (who are targets for con artists), and also lower-income people. How do we encourage financial literacy???
 1. Are there free seminars promoting concepts for achieving financial security?
 2. Where can people go to get advice on how to set-up a trust or will?
 3. Are there programs available to help sole proprietors/business owners concerning investments?
- Role of County Government
 - ◆ What is the role of County government in Quality of Life issues and promoting the County???
 1. Does County government attract or hinder economic development? Does our County government promote the County and encourage new growth?
 2. The need for a County Executive to negotiate and lead the growth of the County.

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COMMITTEE OPEN DISCUSSION

In open discussion, committee members further asked, how does County government create a cultural identity to address the County as a whole and not as separate parts (example: North v. south, township. v. township.; etc.)

Ken DeCock, a committee member representing the agricultural sector, used the example: “A farmer looks at the whole farm and not just the melons and tomatoes in competition. We must acknowledge and enjoy both the urban and rural cultures of our County.”

Amelia Brown of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, added: “Maybe the County has looked at itself (in the past) in pieces and now it is time to look at ourselves as a whole and ask, ‘Who are we as a people?’ It is time to look at the County holistically.”

Art Mullen of the Mt. Clemens DDA, reminded the group, “Quality of Life is the *add-on*’s that make you want to stay in a community.”

The eight criteria were evaluated and ranked in order of descending importance to the Committee’s charge, with the following results.

1. Culture and Activities
2. The Natural and Developed Environment
3. Schools (All Levels)
4. Crime and Public Safety
5. Recreation
6. Healthy Life Styles
7. Financial Security
8. The Role of County Government

The Committee will develop recommendations for the County Board, from among the higher priority ranked items. The number to be fully considered will be determined at future meetings.

The Committee agreed to invite a guest speaker from the Oakland County Quality of Life Committee to speak at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m., with Mr. Rozny asking the members to consider the best way to address the issues – as a group or in sub-groups. Ms. Zardis suggested committee members contact those unable to attend the meeting and encourage them to join the committee for the meeting on July 25, 2006.